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**Total children in county under
age 6: 21%**
**Total Children in county living
poverty %: 24 %**

Union County Highlights

- Save the Children match grant
- Workforce Investment Grant
- Vista Vol. Grant
- "Ready, Set, Go"
- Recycling project
- 2 half day 4K
- Home Visitation for 20 families and adult ed
- Quality childcare training for 13 childcare centers
- "Touch a Truck"

Union County

First Steps Partnership

Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

During the 2009 fiscal year, we were all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations. Due to budget constraints not only at the Partnership level but at the state and local level, we all worked harder in Union County to provide needed training and opportunities for families, and most of all the for children in Union County.

Union County First Steps, Union County School District, DSS, DHEC, Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Pregnancy Prevention, Head Start and other agencies (working with families and children) met regularly to partner and collaborate to ensure limited resources were used appropriately. In addition, each agency understands the problems facing families and children's living in Union County where jobs are disappearing and the unemployment rate is 25%.

Through these efforts we worked together on specific training opportunities. We received a Workforce Investment Grant that will be used to train child care staff in Creative Curriculum in 2010. The School District will train 4k and 5K teachers on the same curriculum so that we have a universal curriculum that is taught throughout the school district which will address all readiness skills needed to be successful in first grade.

Through collaborative efforts with the Arts Council we provided a literacy program entitled "Ready, Set, Go" to local child care providers. As a group, we are actively seeking grant opportunities we can work on as a collaborative group to solve many needs in Union County.

During the Week of the Young Child, First Steps sponsored "Touch a Truck" for the second year. City, County, School District, and individuals within the community through vehicle donations made this event special for the children. Parents were given information on health and school readiness. Healthy snacks were provided by local grocery stores. Over three hundred parents and children attended the event.

Through efforts from our Vista volunteer, a Recycling Campaign was started to help keep our county green. We. Also, received compensation for many items that supplemented our budget for administrative cost.

Sincerely,

Linda C. Parker, Executive Director

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2008-09 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Early Steps

Program Description: Through a match grant with Save the Children Organization, this strategy provided early education services to pregnant women and their children birth to five years of age and ongoing staff training.

The goals of this program are:

- Increase children's language and pre literacy skills that are essential to school success
- Increase parent's knowledge of how to support their child's language development and pre literacy education
- Foster positive home/school connections early in the child's life
- Transition children successful to preschool or kindergarten
- Increase early childhood knowledge and expertise throughout the community

Program Results:

- Served 20 at-risk families with children from birth to three
- All children were enrolled in Imagination Library
- 1,440 books were loaned to children in program
- 511 intensive home visits (lasting one hour) were provided to parents with information and resources to strengthen their roles as the child's most important teacher
- 20 children received an average of three visits per month
- Families reported 100% satisfaction with the program
- 50% of participants showed improvement in assessment measuring parent-child interactions
- 40 4K children at Monarch Elementary received 4 books a week through the "Raising a Reader" program

Adult Education Component: A part-time instructor worked with parents to continue educational goals while their children participated in the Family Resource Play and Learn program. Developmentally appropriate childcare was provided at the literacy center for parents working on educational goals to include GED prep and diploma educational.

Program Results:

- 23 parents were registered in the program
- 5 parents graduated from the program
- 4 parents enrolled in a institute of higher education
- 15 parents had IEPS

Imagination Library

Program Description: First Steps collaborates with Union County School District, and the United Way of the Piedmont to provide nationally renowned Dolly Parton Imagination Library to children in Union County. Developmentally appropriate books arrive monthly to the child's home until he or she reaches five years of age.

Program Results:

- 574 children were enrolled in Dolly Parton Imagination Library
- All children participated in programs funded by First Steps are enrolled Imagination Library program

QUALITY CHILD CARE

Childcare Training and Professional Development

Program Description: The Union County First Steps Partnership provided training for all childcare providers and Head Start in Union County using certified trainers. All workshops were approved by the Center For Child Care Career Development.

Program Results:

- 13 childcare facilities serving over 460 children participated in training by certified trainers
- Head Start staff serving approximately 140 children attended training
- Over 20 hours of certified training was given by trainers

EARLY EDUCATION.

Half -Day Four Year Old Kindergarten

Program Description: The goal of this strategy was to increase the number of children attending high quality childhood education programs by establishing two additional half-day classes to serve 40 of the neediest children.

Program Results:

- 40 children were served
- The classroom is located in a school with the highest poverty level in the district
- All participating students were targeted on the basis of compound school readiness risk factors to include Dial- 3 scores in bottom 25%, free- and reduced-lunch, mother's educational level, health risk and many other factors
- Both teacher and assistant have received certification in High Scope Curriculum

- All participating students were documented to have met all South Carolina Curriculum standards for 4K

SCHOOL TRANSITION

Countdown to Kindergarten

Program Description: The Countdown to Kindergarten program provided 19 at- risk children within the county a six-week summer program using a curriculum developed by the State Office of First Steps and taught by certified teacher. At the end of the program, children and their families met at the assigned school to become familiar with their classroom and their teacher.

Program Results:

- 19 children were served Six visits from a certified teacher
- 12 children were placed in home visitor's classroom

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<u>Expenditures</u> By Funding Source	
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 10</i>)	\$ 116,497.00
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 55</i>)	\$ 10,880.00
Lottery Appropriation (<i>Fund 35</i>)	\$
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 60</i>)	\$
C.O.E. Appropriation (<i>Fund 65</i>)	\$
N.F.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 70</i>)	\$
State Private (<i>Fund 15</i>)	\$ 299.00
Local Private (<i>Fund 20</i>)	\$ 10,978.00
Federal (<i>Fund 30</i>)	\$ 3,841.00
In-Kind (<i>Fund 25</i>)	\$ 57,789.00
TOTAL:	\$ 199,985.00

<u>Expenditures</u> By Program / Strategy Name	
2011- Parents as Teachers	\$ 13,629.00
3161- 4K	\$ 79,146.00
4062- Countdown	\$ 8,564.00
6012- Childcare Quality Enhancement	\$ 6,527.00
6052- Training and Prof. Development	\$ 14,421.00
Indirect Programmatic Functions 1502	\$ 60,380.00
Administrative Functions 1012	\$ 19,939.00
TOTAL:	\$202,606.00

CLARIFICATION(s)

11- State allocation (Carry Forward) \$2323.00

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Aileen Quinn	\$ 5.00
The Timken Company	50.00
Union County Schools	50.00
Union Family pharmacy	50.00
Virginia Blackmon	5.00
Recycle for Charity	5.00
Stanley Alexander	5.00
Linda Parker	213.00
Lockhart Power	100.00
Mary Margaret Roberts	10.00
Jean Pennas	10.00
Judy Fowler	10.00
Brenda Cameron	50.00
Carol Fulbright	5.00
Carolyn Turner	5.00.
Cash Donations	301.25
Brenda Cameron	5.00
Chris Casey	8.00
Connie Springs	5.00
Dale Goff	25.00
Deborah Cromer	15.00
Eco Phones	5.50
Gibson Woodworking	50.00
Jean Pennas	10.00
Judy Fowler	5.00
Linda Chastain	5.00
Linda Edwards	5.00
Linda Parker	213.00
Mary Margaret Roberts	10.00
Susan Williams	5.00
\$ 1,240.75	

Local Match Percentage for FY 2009: 29%
(at least 15% Legislative requirement)

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Susan Adams – Childcare
Jenny Alexander – Library Appointee
Vivian Barrett- Faith community
Annie Bell – Family Education/Literacy
Debra Bishop – DSS Appointee
Mary Virginia Blackwell – Legislative Appointee
Sonja Crank – non profit
Mary Foster – Chair / Family Education/Literacy
Beth Fowler – Business Community
Dale Goff – School Appointee
Mamie Gore – Childcare
Audrey Henderson- Business Community
Torrence Inman – non profit
Paula Jennings- DHEC appointee
Barbara Jeter- Head Start Appointee
Margaret McCarley –Pre-K education
Christine McWhorter – Parent of preschool child
Ed Palmer-Transportation
Wendy Rector – Healthcare
Margie Ruff – Early Education
Connie Springs – Legislative appointee

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY09, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

Your 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile will be inserted by OFS after this section. For your reference, a PDF of this risk profile was sent to you along with your Annual Report Template

Success Stories:

1 Touch a Truck'09

Touch a truck 09 was an interactive exhibit celebrating the Week of the Young Child. This was our second year to present this event to over 300 children of Union County and their families. The Executive Director, Linda Parker developed a task force to plan this special event. The tasks force included representatives from the city government, county government, DSS, DHEC, Arts council, School District, Wallace Thomson Hospital, Union Carnegie Library, Housing Authority, and other local businesses and agencies. Prior to the event, over 150 children from head start and child care facilities met with the Mayor and County Supervisor at the City Municipal Court room on Monday, April 20, 2009. The Mayor read the book "If I were the Mayor" to the children. The children had an opportunity to ask the mayor questions. Many childcare facilities held open house and planned activities during the week. The week ended on Saturday, April 25, 2009 with the signature event, Touch a Truck'09. This event was held at the Union County fairgrounds with every truck imaginable. The owners of the trucks interacted with the children and many allowed the children to sit in the vehicle and explore. Lights and horns were seen and heard all over the fairgrounds. Owners of the vehicles donated the use of their vehicle and their time. Healthy snacks and juice was donated by Bi-lo, Piggly Wiggly, Food Lion and Wal Mart. Fifteen agencies that work and support children in Union County set up booths with information and door prizes. Children were able to enjoy a trackless train that circled the entire fairgrounds. Crafts and face painting was available. This year we added a talent portion to the event. Everyone enjoyed performances by two young ladies with beautiful voices and local dance studios performed also. This talent performance was emceed by Miss Teen Union.

Our continued goal with this event was to have an event the children would enjoy and build lasting relationships with local agencies in Union County that work with children and families of children. Our goal was met. This event was made possible again this year by the enthusiasm, collaboration and hard work of many people who have a deep love for our children in Union County.

2 “Ready, Set, Go!”- A literacy program which is a result of collaboration with Union County First Steps, Union County Arts Center and University of South Carolina- Union was implemented to serve over 60 children in childcare programs in Union County. Three college work study students from the University of South Carolina Union were trained on how best to read a book to children. A guide sheet was developed on each book. The guide sheet pointed out labels, colors, shapes and sizes, numbers, categories, causing things to happen, and relationships. Children were encouraged to join when they read familiar words or phrases. Children were asked questions about pictures to help them reason things out. Nursery rhymes, songs and other activities were used to enhance this literacy experience. The response from the children and the childcare providers was very positive. Due to collaborative efforts, the cost of this project was virtually nonexistent.

3 Parenting/Family Strengthening:

One very special story I would like to share involves a parent, Debra Lanier who participated in our family strengthening programs. Her adult Ed instructor reports that she initially started working with Debra in the completion of her diploma. After refresher courses in math, Debra received her diploma. Debra has continued her education at Spartanburg TEC and has completed three semesters on the Dean’s List in Dental Hygiene. Debra spoke to graduating class at Adult Ed this past spring.

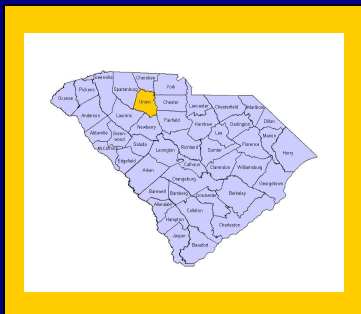
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The Union County First Steps Partnership was very fortunate to receive a Vista Grant that allowed the Partnership to have a Vista Volunteer Member to join the Executive Director in building capacity for programs. Our Vista Volunteer began a recycling program for our Partnership. Many agencies in the community to include the school district are sending all computer cartridges, telephones, old computers to be recycled. This project has not only helped to keep our community green, but we have received monetary awards and credits that we have used for office supplies that was much needed in a year were budgets were deeply cut.

5 Save the Children- The Partnership was one of four counties who received the Early Steps matching grant with Save the Children. This grant allowed us to continue with our family strengthening strategy for 20 at risk families with children ages birth to three years of age. These children also participated in the “Raising a Reader” book exchange program. Through “Raising a Reader” these children had 4 different books brought into their home each week. As a result of this grant, 40 4K children at Monarch Elementary also participated in the book exchange program. Through our association with Save the

Children, Monarch Elementary was also given an additional grant which provided an after school program to include nutrition, physical education and home work assistance . We have recently learned, that another school Foster Park Elementary will also be added to the after school program.

#6 Workforce Investment Grant- The Partnership was delighted to partner with the Workforce Investment to bring a \$28,000 grant that will be used to offer training to our childcare providers in Union County. Beginning in January, 2010, 50 childcare providers will have an opportunity to receive training by Kaplan on the “Creative Curriculum. We will, also, be collaborating with the Union County School District to use the Creative Curriculum model as the universal curriculum used in childcare, head start, and 4 and 5K in Union County.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Union County

Total Children Under Six: 1,998

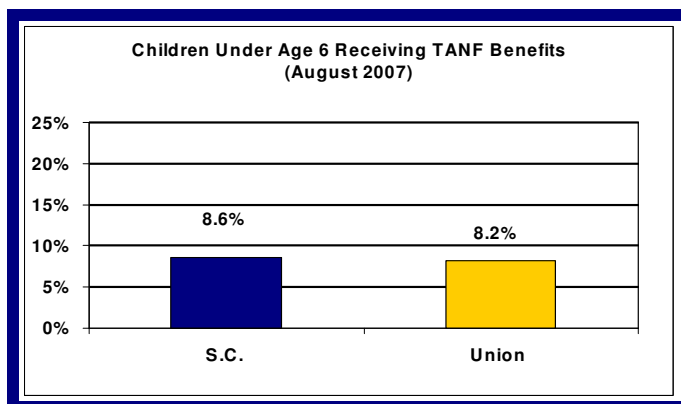
CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%

Union County (2007): 8.2%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 12 Union County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.
- 163 of Union County’s 1,998 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.



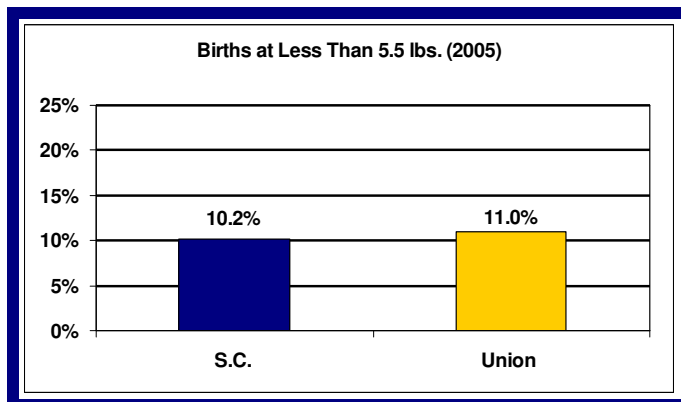
CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%

Union County (2005): 11.0%

Fast Fact: 1 in 10 Union County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.
- Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.
- 35 of the 317 children born in Union County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.

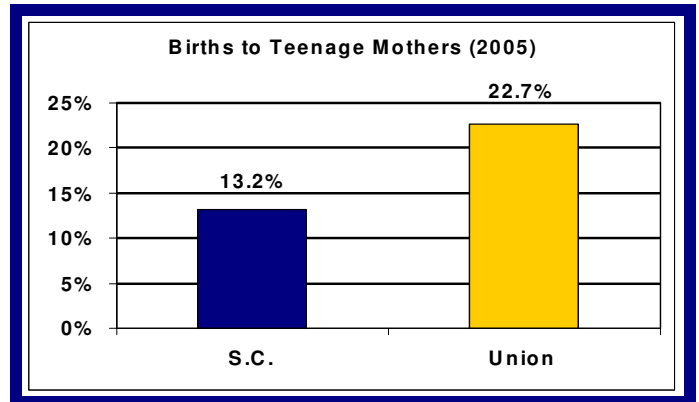


BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2% Union County (2005): 22.7%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 4 Union County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.
- 72 of the 317 children born in Union County during 2005 had teenage mothers.

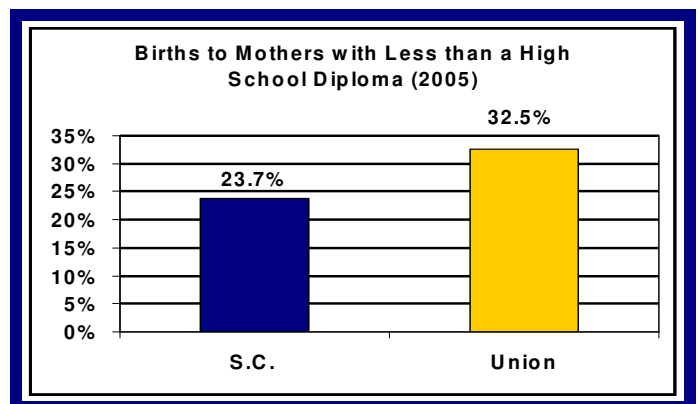


BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7% Union Sumter County (2005): 32.5%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 3 children in Union County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.
- 103 of the 317 children born in Union County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.



All data provided by the SC Budget and Control Board’s Office of Research and Statistics